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ABSTRACT

A nomothetic assessment of the drive-by shooting in inter-barrio gang violence was conducted. Available data on drive-by shootings were organized using the model of behavioral assessment suggested by Kanfer and Saslow (1969). The model included seven areas of analysis: initial assessment, clarification of the problem, motivation, development, self-control, social relationships, and socio-cultural-physical environment. The assessment indicated that: drive-by shooting, defined as the chain of behaviors in which the perpetrator used a firearm from a moving vehicle to inflict injury or death on one or more victims or to damage property, was an excessive behavior which most community members hoped to see entirely extinguished; depending upon the antecedent stimuli, drive-by shootings were categorized as "provoked" or "unprovoked"; social reinforcement for the problem behavior came from such sources as peer approval and the amount and type of news media coverage devoted to gang violence; self-control was exercised in gauging the severity of a motorized attack; although an attack was well-planned, the actual execution of the plan was the source of some anxiety reduced through the use of psychoactive substances; and the wider availability of both cars and guns made the drive-by shooting a more likely form of violence than the face-to-face street fighting common in the past. (NQA)

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Behavior Modification in the Treatment and Prevention of Inter-barrio Gang Violence

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Behavior Modification in the Treatment and Prevention of Inter-barrio Gang Violence

Inter-barrio gang violence is surely the most serious aspect of Chicano gang delinquency. Of all possible forms that such violence takes, the use of guns in "drive-by" assaults from motor vehicles has recently caused the most concern (Barker, 1980). Yet, little is known of the behavioral dynamics underlying drive-by shootings. The antecedent stimuli, the topography of the behavior, and the consequent stimuli maintaining the behavior have not been closely studied. An accurate behavioral assessment can assist community workers to generate appropriate intervention strategies, and may increase the probability that such strategies will be effective in reducing the frequency or the seriousness of drive-by assaults. In addition, a behavioral assessment can suggest directions for further research.

This paper presents a nomothetic assessment (Barlow, 1981) of the drive-by shooting as a model for other such assessments. Although there are several behavioral assessment models available for this purpose, that of Kanfer and Saslow (1969) is utilized here, since it has proven effective in previous related work (Hunsaker, 1981; Stumphauzer, Veloz, & Aiken, 1981).

Method

The model of behavioral assessment suggested by

Kanfer and Saslow (1969) was used to organize available data on drive-by shootings and to elucidate areas in need of further research. The model is composed of seven areas of analysis, as follows: initial assessment, clarification of the problem, motivation, development, self-control, social relationships, and socio-cultural-physical environment.

The model includes a series of probe-questions for each area of analysis. For example, in the initial assessment, the behavior analyst asks three questions: Is the behavior occurring too frequently (an excess)? Is the behavior occurring too infrequently (a deficit)? Is the behavior non-problematic (an asset)?

Results

Initial assessment. The drive-by shooting is defined here as the chain of behaviors in which the perpetrator uses a firearm from a moving vehicle to inflict injury or death on one or more victims, or to damage property. Obviously, the drive-by shooting is an excessive behavior, but more specifically, it is a behavior which most community members would hope to see entirely extinguished.

Clarification of the problem. Depending upon the antecedent stimuli, drive-by shootings can be categorized as "provoked" or "unprovoked." A provoked shooting occurs when the most salient antecedent stimulus is some behavior of a member of a second barrio. This may itself be an act of violence, or something less serious, such as a

boundary-crossing in which one barrio's placa (the name or initials of the barrio written in a special script) is crossed out and replaced by that of another barrio (Torres, 1979).

An unprovoked shooting may occur when the antecedent stimuli do not appear to include specific behaviors on the part of rival gang members. Instead, stimuli within the "home" barrio precede the violence. An example is the process of recruitment and initiation of new members. Since the barrio must recruit new members periodically to replace older members who are dissociating from the gang (Torres, 1979), the recruitment process as an antecedent to drive-by shootings also occurs periodically. New members may then be asked to prove their loyalty to the "home" barrio by attacking a rival barrio in a drive-by shooting (Baltazar, Note 1).

Motivation. Drive-by shootings have not diminished in frequency because of the horror they arouse in the community; fear in the community may be a reinforcer that helps to maintain the behavior. Social reinforcement for the problem behavior can come from many sources. Peer approval is influential (Cartwright, Tomson, & Schwartz, 1975). Salamanca (Note 2) suggests that many adults have latent vested interests in maintaining the problem behavior. This is evidenced in part by the amount and type of news media coverage devoted to gang violence. Salamanca further suggests that the elaborate, well-attended funerals given murdered gang

members, and the "hero's welcome" (p. 1) given the accused murderer, also help to maintain the behavior.

Development. The drive-by shooting is the most recent stage in an evolving process which Moore and her co-workers (1979) have identified as a "challenge to the world" by the Chicano gang member (p. 36). The process began in the 1940s, during the Pachuco era, with dress styles and distinctive verbal behavior (Barker, 1947). Today, the challenge includes behaviors ranging from graffiti-writing to violence with firearms. The various stages in this process are described by Moore as "innovations," in which successive gang cliques modify existing behavior patterns by making them more extreme (p. 40). An existing gang behavior norm was violated when guns were first used. This was followed by the combined use of guns and vehicles, and seems to have temporarily stabilized with the abandonment of the norm which formerly prohibited shooting into a house occupied by women or children. It may be a worthwhile exercise to attempt to predict what direction such stylistic innovations will take in the immediate future.

Self-control. Although drive-by shootings seem to be wanton acts of violence devoid of self-control, self-control is in fact exercised in gauging the severity of a motorized attack. Torres (1979) notes (p. 13): "If a barrio merely wants to warn or scare off another barrio, they may shoot at a car known to belong to someone in that

barrio or at a home which is a known hangout for gang members. When someone from one barrio is killed, the members may go out with a specific intent of killing someone from the offending barrio in retaliation." Thus, gang members make specific decisions to increase or decrease the severity of a drive-by shooting, depending upon the antecedent stimuli.

Most drive-by shootings are committed by gang members under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol (Torres, 1979; Baltazar, Note 1). Thus, although an attack is well-planned, the actual execution of the plan is the source of some anxiety which is reduced through the use of psychoactive substances.

Social relationships. As noted, peer influence is a potent reinforcer in the lives of most gang members. In some cases, the gang may replace the family as the primary source of reinforcers (Brown, 1978). In this sense, gang leaders wield the power to control some of the behavior of their followers, through both social and physical reinforcement. Duran (1975) found some of the reinforcing aspects of gang membership to include "friendship, fraternity, protection, social activities, outlets for frustration, identity, a sense of power, excitement, a 'cause,' advocacy services, and economic resources" (p. 28).

The degree of influence exerted by veteranos ("retired" gang members) on younger gang members is not known, and may differ from barrio to barrio.

Torres (1979) found that former gang leaders tended to lose influence as they grew older. On the other hand, some observers, including many law enforcement officials, believe that barrio gangs are largely controlled by veteranos, especially pintos (prisoners), from both inside and outside of correctional institutions (Ault, 1978).

Socio-cultural-physical environment. The stylistic behavioral innovations which have resulted in the drive-by shooting phenomenon have also been explained in terms of technological change and increasing affluence of barrio young people. Salamanca (Note 3, p. 2) reports that, "'carruchas' or 'ranflas' were not that widely used in the 50's, (and) that might explain why nobody went by shooting at someone or something...the car was a luxury that only a few could afford." Thus, the wider availability of both cars and guns have made the drive-by shooting a more likely form of violence than the face-to-face street fighting common in the past.

Discussion

The behavioral assessment of the drive-by shooting is informative but indicates clearly that much work remains to be done. Because of the "semisecret" character of barrio gangs (Moore et al., 1978, p. 36), researchers must proceed with caution and attempt to collaborate closely with gang members and former gang members in the collection of data. To collect valid data, researchers must be able to overcome the "code of silence" adhered to

by most gang members, prohibiting the provision of information to outsiders (Landsbaum, 1980, p. 4). If this can be accomplished, gaps in knowledge concerning inter-barrio violence can be filled in and effective interventions can be planned.

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